

THE BOLSHEVIKI
and the
AMERICAN AID
to RUSSIA

(An Open Letter to the American-Russian Chamber
of Commerce of New York.)

By S. S. NOVOSSELOFF



*(Copy of a letter addressed to
The American-Russian Cham-
ber of Commerce, on May 11,
1918.)*

THE AMERICAN-RUSSIAN
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,
NEW YORK.

GENTLEMEN :

Your bulletin of April 23, 1918, is devoted to a question of vital importance, that of ways in which America can render assistance to the Russian people. As a Russian who loves his native land and suffers deeply because of the harrowing misfortunes that have befallen her, and who knows Russia well and her people, I cannot remain silent concerning the question that you raise.

I left Russia in September, 1917, two months before the Bolshevist coup d'etat, for England and America, whither I went on behalf of the Russian Tanners' Association, of which I am the President and which was organized by me for the purpose of mobilizing that branch of industry for the needs of the Russian army. As a member of the Executive Committee of the All-Russian Council of Trade and Industry, and also one of the founders and members of the Central War Industrial Committee; as an active worker in many other public organizations, and being always in touch with the members of the Provisional Government, most of whom I know well personally, I was very close to the events as they unfolded themselves since the very first days of the revolution, having had an active part in which was taking place.

All the circumstances and also the fact that I had spent all my life in active practical work in different social layers of Russia's population and had traveled

all over my extensive native land from the White Sea to the Black Sea, and from the Gulf of Finland to the Pacific Ocean, not only give me a right to speak upon this question, but render it my duty to help, to the extent of my ability, the magnificent initiative of the American people with respect to my poor native land.

After reading the above named bulletin I came to the conclusion that its writer has entirely false impression of what is really taking place in Russia at the present time. The information which I receive personally from the Russians who arrive in this country and many of whom visit the American Agency of our Association, which has forty branches all over Russia and Siberia, as well as that received from competent and responsible Russians and Americans recently arriving from Russia, published in the press, and, finally, the information contained in the Russian newspapers of the end of March, copies of which have just reached me—all this does not in the least bear out the assertion with which your bulletin begins, viz: "constructive and more responsible forces are beginning to make themselves felt in the Soviet Government."

On the contrary, all this information leads one to form the opposite conclusion. And it must be noted that the sources of information which I have mentioned may be considered the only trustworthy and reliable ones, for the so-called Bolshevik Government is doing everything in its power to prevent from appearing in the foreign press any correspondence from Russia which are unfavorable to their regime or describe the facts of the horrors of anarchy and devastation that are taking place in Russia today.

In this letter I should like, with the aid of exact and reliable facts at my disposal, to throw light upon one side of the Bolshevik activities viz.—their attitude to-

wards the Intelligentsia, i. e., the educated classes. This side of their activity is most important, in my opinion, for an adequate answer to the question whether any constructive work is going on in Russia at the present time and whether such work is possible in those parts of Russia, in which the Bolsheviki reign supreme.

Since the very beginning of their propaganda of internationalism and the necessity of concluding an immediate peace at any price in order to begin a forceful establishment in Russia and later on in the whole world of a Socialist order of society by means of a proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, *the Bolsheviki declared as their chief enemy not only the bourgeoisie, but also the whole of the Russian Intelligentsia, i. e., not only all those who belong to the propertied class, which is not at all numerous in Russia, but also all those who, by education or position, are close to that class.* This included teachers, petty government and railroad officials, engineers, men active in local organs of self-government, judges, lawyers, employes in the banks and in commercial and industrial enterprises, in short, all those who constitute the thinking part of Russia's population. All these were declared "servants of the bourgeoisie," and enemies of the people, i. e. of the peasants and the workingmen, although by their origin and sympathies, and very often by their economic condition, they were much nearer to the people than those who rule Russia today. For the leaders of today had long ago lost all connection with their native land, having spent most of their life as exiles in Germany and Switzerland, in the midst of the German international Socialists. And they were brought back to Russia with the careful assistance of the German Government.

This attitude of the Bolsheviki towards the Rus-

sian Intelligentsia is due primarily to the fact that Karl Marx considered as belonging to the ranks of the bourgeoisie all those who collaborate with it, especially in the industrial activities, although this doctrine has been almost completely given up by Marx's followers. There is no doubt that this attitude of the Bolsheviki towards the Intelligentsia is also due to the influence, known to the whole world and now proved by means of documents, that was exerted upon the Bolshevikist propaganda by our enemies, who realize that it is just as important to separate the people from the Intelligentsia, as it is to send away the officers from the army. And the success of this propaganda is due to the ignorance (such as an American cannot even imagine) which is the chief misfortune of the Russian peasantry and the larger part of the workingmen. The masses of workingmen and soldiers, to whom the Bolshevikist propaganda of class hatred has been preached so long, are ready to see their enemy in every educated person. This explains the wholesale and cruel massacres of the intelligentsia and of the officers that have taken place in many cities. These massacres are all the more numerous because they afford an opportunity for plunder as well. Finally, it must also be remembered that the Russian intelligentsia, even the poorest of it, has never been with the Bolsheviki, but had joined the Constitutional-Democratic, the Social-Revolutionary and the Menshevist Social-Democratic parties. All these parties stand for broad social and democratic reforms, but they realize that an immediate and sudden introduction of Socialism even in time of peace and by means of a proletarian revolution and a dictatorship of the proletariat, can lead only to anarchy and unprecedented national misfortunes. Thus the Russian intelligentsia,

because of its convictions and because of the hatred which the Bolsheviks preach against it, cannot possibly collaborate or cooperate with them.

This absence of cooperation should not be construed as indicating that the educated classes are doing nothing at all and are simply waiting for the time when the Bolsheviks shall have proven completely their inability to do anything. On the contrary, realizing all the horrors into whose depths the Bolsheviks had cast Russia, these classes are doing their utmost to help their country, but these efforts cannot be called cooperation, for in many cases they simply cannot apply their knowledge and ability, while in other cases they are placed in conditions in which they cannot perform the work that is really needed.

In order to illustrate the above it is sufficient to present the following facts. One of the first acts of the Bolshevik government was to abolish all civil and criminal courts. They thus destroyed the judicial institutions which were based upon one of the best codes in Europe and which consisted of the flower of the Russian intelligentsia. In this way thousands of educated men, who had been known all over Russia for their honesty, and who were often contented with very scanty remuneration and in some cases were really poverty stricken, have been thrown overboard, declared enemies of the people, and doomed to a life of actual starvation. The same fate befell the law profession. In the place of the courts there have been established revolutionary tribunals, consisting of ignorant workmen and soldiers. These tribunals concern themselves with political cases, while the civil and criminal cases are not tried anywhere.

And what do the former judges and lawyers do? Most of them turn to physical labor, but it is not easy

to find it, for most of the factories, from which the owners, the superintendents and the engineers have been driven out, are closed. The only employment that remains for these men is to clean the streets, sell newspapers, cut wood, and help the common cause in whatever other way possible.

Here is another illustration. In those schools which have not as yet shut down because of lack of means, the administrative councils have been removed and in their place committees are organized, which consist of pupils and the members of the servants in the schools. I know personally of a case where in a school for girls a washerwoman, who had formerly washed linen in the school, had been chosen by such a committee as the Directress of the school. In one of the Petrograd schools a janitor of the building had been appointed by the Government as the Commissary for that school. Is it possible under such conditions for teachers to cooperate with the Bolsheviki? They teach in some cases, but they do not cooperate, for the administration of the schools is not in their hands, but in those of the pupils and the janitors.

The whole world knows how simply the Bolsheviki have solved the problem of Russia's indebtedness. They merely declared all of Russia's internal and external debts nonexistent. Is it possible for the officials of the Ministry of Finance, most of whom are men with a university education, who realize the madness and the dishonesty of such an act, to cooperate with those who have decreed it? And in fact the officials of the Ministry refuse to have part in this disgraceful affair, preferring to die or to sweep the streets of the capital. The most important of them are in prison. It is true, according to my information that the Ministry of Finance has begun to work again. The poorest

of the officials, burdened with poverty and large families, are compelled to return to work. But can this be called cooperation, and can their work be truly productive?

Exactly the same thing can be said of the banks which are still closed. The same thing applies to the municipal organs of self-government, consisting of moderate Socialists elected after the revolution on the basis of universal suffrage. These officials have been driven away by the crowds of workingmen and soldiers, led by the Bolsheviki, and new ones have been "elected" to take their place, mostly shady and suspicious characters. Finally, the work of the railroads became entirely disorganized, because their management was placed in the hands of committees of workingmen, while the constructing engineers were either driven out or allowed to remain merely in the capacity of advisers.

It would be possible to cite any number of examples of this kind, based on incontrovertible facts. I should like to speak of just one more phenomenon—the fate of a part of the Russian intelligentsia which cannot in any way be listed with the capitalistic class viz.—the Russian army officers, who will go down into history as true martyrs.

Long before the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, when the Bolsheviki signed an armistice with the Germans, placing Ensign Krylenko, whom his own comrades termed "mad Abram," at the head of the army, and the illiterate sailor Dybenko at the head of the navy, orders were given that the officers should be deprived of their commands and their places taken by soldiers, selected by the regiments. These orders were a signal for massacres of the unfortunate officers, who had suffered in the trenches for three years and received torture and death as their reward from the hands of the

unfortunate soldiers, ignorant and starving, intoxicated with the propaganda of hatred that the Bolsheviks preached to them. Not only the officers, but their families, also, were massacred. Even those officers were murdered who were lying sick in the hospitals.

I may be asked how it is possible that this has really taken place. I may be asked whether the Russian people is really so savage and cruel. Everything that I have related is based on perfectly reliable facts. But the Russian people is not savage; on the contrary, it is kind and peace-loving. And yet any crowd of men, poisoned by pernicious propaganda and by hatred, is always cruel, especially during the periods of anarchy which always brings forth from the depths of the people its worst elements.

The facts that I have cited are sufficient, it seems to me, to show that there is no constructive work in Russia and that none is possible, as long as the country is still under the rule of the Bolsheviks, who have crushed all free expression of the great Russian mind and soul by an unprecedented despotism of the city mob, the more ignorant portions of the working class and the deserters from the once glorious, but no longer existing Russian army. Who is it then who does collaborate with Lenin, Trotsky and Zinoviev in the government of the great Russian people? Besides the numberless revolutionary committees, consisting of half-literate workmen and soldiers, there is a great number of revolutionary commissaries and their assistants, among whom there are many of the scum of the intelligentsia. Let me mention two names to show what I mean. One of the commissaries is Manusevich-Manuylov, who was an assistant of the pro-German Prime Minister Sturmer, and was arrested under the Imperial regime for bribery and other crimes, being sentenced to imprison-

ment. The President of the Revolutionary Tribunal Kozlovsky was expelled from the legal profession for dishonesty, and under Kerensky's Government was accused of being a German spy, having to seek safety in flight, for his arrest on that charge had been ordered.

Under such conditions is it possible to speak of constructive work? Is it possible to call constructive work Trotsky's announcement that he intends to organize a new army, abolish the electoral system that he himself had introduced, and recall the officers of the old army, so many of whose numbers had been murdered and massacred by his order, while the rest were driven out in disgrace and degradation? He intends to recall those same officers who were compelled to clean the streets of Petrograd and Moscow, while German officers walked those same streets dressed in their full uniform.

The American people and its leaders must realize that no cooperation is possible between a great Democracy and those who have declared over and over again that they are waging a remorseless struggle against "all bourgeois democracies, among which the American Democracy is the most bourgeois"; with those who have concluded a shameful peace and have betrayed the Allies merely for the purpose of engaging in a new war, more bloody, more cruel and ruthless; the war of the proletariat against the democratic governments of the world. *The American people and its leaders must, at last, understand that the Bolsheviki are not a political party, like the radicals, or the republicans, or the socialists, but the Bolshevism, is a theory, is a peculiar development of the extreme ideas of the German international Socialists, spiced with ignorance and Russian idealism. And the success of Bolshevism is due exclusively to the ignorance of the masses of the Russian*

people, exhausted by the war and shaken by the revolution.

I cannot but call attention to two very important peculiar features of the Russian Bolshevism—its irresistible class hatred and envy, and its complete contempt for and denial of the basic rules of morals and ethics, that have been worked out by mankind in national, as well as international relations. In this respect, too, the Russian Bolsheviki are the diligent pupils of the German socialists, whom the famous German sociologist Zombard accused of being unethical in their actions. But the pupils have far out-stripped the masters. It would take too long to present facts proving this. I shall merely mention a few of the outstanding ones.

Everyone knows of the disgraceful violation of the treaty with the Allies; of the arrest of the Roumanian ambassador, who was liberated only because of the efforts of the whole diplomatic corps, especially of Ambassador Francis; of the refusal to recognize the international financial obligations. Everyone knows that the chief accusation that the Bolsheviki brought against the government of Kerensky was that it delayed in the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. And yet when the Assembly did meet and there happened to be in it a majority against the Bolsheviki, the Assembly was dispersed and some of its leaders, also Socialists, were imprisoned. Finally, the most dishonest, cynical action that shows the lack of any ethical convictions and decency on the part of the Bolsheviki is the following declaration of Zinoviev, one of the most prominent men in the Lenin-Trotsky government. This declaration, made at the official session of the Petrograd Council of Soldiers's and Workmen's Deputies, illustrates, at the same time, the attitude of the

Bolsheviki towards the United States and its Government, with which they now attempt to establish relations, trying to save themselves. According to the report of this session, published in the "Retch" of February 20 Lionvieve, in his speech about the famous telegram of President Wilson, addressed to the Russian people through the Moscow Congress of Soviets, that had ratified the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty, in speaking of that message from America, so full of noble and kindly sentiment, declared that the telegram sent by the "bourgeois" President of the most "bourgeois" republic in the world was like the telegram which Kaiser Wilhelm had sent to the Boers during the South African war for the purpose of compelling England not to oppose the actions of Germany in obtaining colonies from the Portuguese, and the resolution of the Moscow Congress regarding the telegram of President Wilson in which the "Soviet Russia" had declined the proffered assistance of the U. S., was a "double slap in the face."

The only consolation that remains is that the *"Soviet Russia" is not the real Russia, but merely a crowd of dishonest usurpers and utopians, that had joined forces with the German agents and the agents of the old monarchic regime, a crowd consisting of the ignorant parts of the workingmen from the factories that no longer exist, and of soldiers from the army that has also ceased to exist, but that the Russian people and the Russian intelligentsia value deeply the noble sentiment of the great leader of the greatest Democracy in the world and have nothing but contempt for the usurpers who have betrayed Russia to the foe and have devastated her and tore her to pieces.*

In your bulletin you quote the statement of The Globe's Moscow correspondent, Mr. Browne that "the

Russian people hope for the direct cooperation of the United States and her Allies in reorganizing the Russian armies and in assisting the Soviet Government in the solving of Russia's economic and financial problems." The Russian people cannot but desire the aid of America, fully realizing that only from your people, always ready to help the suffering nations and moreover the richest in the world, can this assistance come. But I believe that you will agree with me, after what has already been said, that it is hardly probable that Russian people should desire that America would cooperate with those who had cast Russia into that woeful and shameful condition in which she finds herself. On the contrary, I can assert that there is a growing hatred among the peasant masses against those who are responsible for this.

Further you quote Mr. Browne as follows: "The Russians now realize that Germany is an individual menace, previously they thought that Germany only menaced the Czar. The Russian democracy is a real democracy, although entirely different from the Anglo-Saxon democracy. It is a democracy which with the passage of time will certainly spread into Slavic Austria. The Russian democracy will never die, for the country is strong for freedom. But unless it receives the support of the United States and her Allies, Germany might succeed in stifling it." This statement is so insincere and is so far removed from the truth of the situation, that it would not have been worth while to refute it, had it not been quoted in your bulletin, which shows that you attach a certain importance to it.

This statement is, moreover, interesting because it shows the policy of the Bolsheviki who are ready to deceive the American people by lies and hypocrisy in their attempt to save themselves. Through Mr. Browne

the Bolsheviki declare that the Russian people has finally realized that Germany is a menace not only for the Tsar, but for the Russian people as well. Who does not know that the Kaiser had always been a close friend and adviser of the former Tsar? Who does not know that it was his influence that was responsible for the reactionary policy of the Russian Imperial government, the policy that had, at last, led to the revolution? The Russian people, led by its intelligentsia, never liked the Germans. It had always understood the significance of Germany's militaristic tendencies, hated the German militarism and realized its menace not only for Russia, but for the whole civilized world. The public opinion in Russia greeted enthusiastically the news of the declaration of the war. Everybody remembers the first session of the Douma following the declaration of war, at which patriotism burned so brightly. And it was the Douma, that almost unanimously struggled against the Tsar's government, which was leading Russia to ruin. Since the very beginning of the war all the progressive and radical, as well as most of the conservative elements in Russia, had united upon the platform of bringing the war to victorious close in cooperation with the Allies. But all these elements hated the Tsar's regime, which was overthrown because of the united and concerted actions of these elements with the people and because of the leading role assumed by the Douma during the first days of the revolution.

It is therefore a falsehood that is uttered by the Bolsheviki when they declare through Mr. Browne that it is only now that the Russian people has recognized the menace of Germany. The Russian people and the Russian intelligentsia recognized this long before the war, and if a handful of half-educated Utopians, influenced by the German propaganda, did not want to

understand it, or, because of its ignorance, could not understand it, and has through its actions betrayed Russia, it will answer for this before the bar of history and of the Russian people. Now when the Bolsheviki have already done all that the Germans wanted, when Russia, especially the European part of it, is entirely deprived of its army, is torn by civil war and finds itself at the mercy of the Germans, time is nearing when the Bolsheviki will no longer be needed by the Germans. It is possible, though, that the Germans will support them for some time yet, until they shall have spread their influence to Siberia. And realizing that their end is near, that the indignation against them grows every day, the Bolsheviki are seeking material and spiritual assistance in Democratic America. They declare that "Russian democracy is a real democracy, although entirely different from the Anglo-Saxon democracy" and that "this democracy will certainly spread into Slavic Austria." Of course, what the Bolsheviki call the "Russian democracy" has nothing in common with the Anglo-Saxon democracy, for this latter means the rule of the majority, while the "Russian democracy" is the class despotism of the minority over the majority of the people. But in order to secure the assistance of the American democracy they declare that their own brand is bound to spread through Slavic Austria. Why in Austria only? They conduct a vigorous Bolshevik propaganda in England and in America, while in Austria the highly civilized Bohemian nation spurns this propaganda with contempt, while thousands of Bohemian workingmen go from the United States as volunteers to die for that same "Anglo-Saxon Democracy," which alone, they realize, can save them from the German yoke.

Passing now to the very complicated problem, also raised by you, of the need of rendering assistance to Russia, I agree with you entirely that "Russia is still and will continue to be the real focus point of the entire international situation. Until Russia has been restored and until a stable, strong democratic government in Russia with well developed opposition to German political and economic control has been established, the objectives for which we entered the war will not have been won. It is imperative, therefore, that this fact should be thoroughly understood and realized by the American people."

Assistance to Russia by the Allies and especially by the United States, which is so rich in resources, is really in keeping with the common interests of all the nations that are waging this unprecedented war for liberty and justice against violence and barbarism. The Russian people has amply deserved this assistance because of its incalculable sacrifices for the common cause.

It is impossible, of course, in the scope of a letter, to discuss fully this complicated problem. But it seems to me that it is clear from what has already been said *that this assistance should not proceed along the lines of cooperation with the Bolsheviki.* It is certain that this cooperation would be fatal for the Russian people, for it would bring no aid to the people, but merely prolong its agony.

But the American people can and surely will aid the Russian people to bring its freedom, won by such sufferings, into the free and clear road of true democracy. I believe that the hour is near when the creative forces of the Russian people that had remained dormant so long because of many causes, will awaken and become active. *It is only necessary to find the right moment when these forces may be helped both ma-*

terially and morally to assert themselves both in Russia and in America, where millions of Russians have found their homes, but have not lost their ties with the native land.

This should be the general scheme. In particular, what is most desirable in the near future and what will be accepted with gratitude by the Russian people is material aid, especially of articles of prime necessity, that Russia lacks so acutely. Thanks to the mad social experiments of the Bolsheviks, the mining and the manufacturing industries have almost come to a standstill. Many parts of Russia, especially the cities, are starving. Provisions and medical aid are needed there. The sufferings in Russia are scarcely conceivable. Indeed, "if the country was able to express the horrors of the present condition, the world would be treated to one of the most harrowing recitals of human suffering ever recorded."

To organize relief work expeditions to Russia would be to meet an urgent necessity. This relief work would, at the same time, be a channel for the propaganda of ideas of true democracy and would raise the already high prestige of the name of the American nation among the masses of the people. The creative forces of the people will gather around these relief workers, and the movement itself will help these forces to awaken and to assert themselves.

Yours very truly,

S. S. NOVOSSELOFF.

New York, May 11, 1918.



